

THE HEARTHSTONE

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THE CROWNLESS HAT.

BY DR. THOMAS DUNN ENGLISH.

It doubtless had been a respectable hat. That I saw on the edge of the sidewalk to-day. Though crownless and battered and torn and all that. And it certainly wasn't the least in my way. But I reached where it lay with the end of my stick. And carefully drew the old thing to my feet. Then I stopped for a moment and gave it a kick. And landed it out where they crossed o'er the street.

An elderly gentleman crossing just then. Well-gloved, neatly booted, and clad in the best—Apparent no courtier man among men—Couldn't let the old head-gear quietly rest. He peered through his gold-mounted spectacles down. At the fabric of plush I had tossed in his path; He twisted his eye-brows of gray to a frown, And he kicked it, with every appearance of wrath.

A delicate girl tripping early to school, With lunch-box and satchel, came past where it lay. She was thinking, no doubt, of some difficult rule, Or oozing the lesson set down for the day. She paused for a moment—the hat met her eye—She bent her head downward, her lip formed a curl. She cast a quick glance to see no one was nigh. Then with tip of her toe gave the old hat a whirl.

Some boys on their errand of mischief were bent, All eager for what gave a promise of fun, And as past with their whooping and shouting they went, The hat rushed and torn met the vision of one. "Ho! here is a football!" and toward it rose. Propelled by the force of the little men's feet; Till, trampled by shoe soles and dented by toes, It soon found its way to the end of the street.

Meanwhile on the curb-stone there lay an old shoe; It was rusty and weather-worn, twisted and ripped. With a rent in the front where a toe had come through. And a piece where the sole from the welt had been ripped. But no one disturbed it; it lay where 't was thrown, Though directly before every passer's sight: In kicking the hat was our enemy shown, And solely in that we expended our spite.

I puzzled my noddle a reason to find Why the hat should be spurned and the shoe should escape; But rejected the first one that came to my mind, That the cause lay in relative softness and shape. We pity the hat who is worn out by toil; But we jeer at Napoleon now he is down: The shoe was created to press on the soil; The hat is degraded in losing its crown.

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IN AFTER-YEARS;

OR,
FROM DEATH TO LIFE.

BY MRS. ALEXANDER ROSS.
CHAPTER IV.

"BACK FROM THE JAWS OF DEATH."

"Surely that is a man lying by the hedge-side there," said a farmer to his son, as they drove to market in the early morning. "Yes it is, and an old man too; we must not leave him there so far from a house, he has been out late last night and was too tired to get home."

The farmer jumped down from his wagon, and almost started at the matted hair and gray beard met his eyes. Richard Cuninghame was sick nigh unto death; his clothes, saturated with the cold night dew, clung round his shivering limbs to numb, not to shelter them; and his aching head lay on the hard soil, with no wish over to rise again, love and hate alike gone, the powers of the soul prostrate before the pressing, crying, wants of the body.

"Are ye sick old man, that ye'er lying there?" inquired the kind-hearted farmer.

The gray-beard opened his eyes, looking helplessly in the face bending over him, but scarcely comprehending what he heard.

"Are ye far from home, where do you bide?" resumed the farmer.

"I have no home," groaned out the old man.

"Lord save us, ye'er an old man to be wandering about, and you so sick like, what's the matter with you?"

"I do not know, leave me to die," said the old man closing his eyes.

"No, we canna do that; come here John, we'll lift him into the wagon, and take him to Auldborough, we will get some place there to put him into."

He was a big man, and no light weight, but the father and son placed him in the cart, and in the course of an hour or two, brought him to the minister's house at Auldborough.

The minister had no way to provide for him but by sending him to the hospital in the neighbouring city, and there he was conveyed in a cart provided with a mattress and blankets.

He had a long struggle for life, but his iron constitution at last prevailed. He was conscious and opened his eyes to see himself in a room with several beds, on all of which were stretched, sick men, like himself the recipients of charity.

He got well rapidly, and when at last he could sit up in his bed, he found by the aid of a little



"WHO ARE YOU?"

glass half a foot long hung on the wall opposite, that he had a hundred times more chance of being recognized as the Sir Richard Cuninghame of Haddon Castle than he had the day he entered the hospital.

His long beard was gone, the matted elf locks were also a thing of the past, and although his flesh was worn and thin, yet his face had lost the pallid unearthly hue which long confinement in a place where no sunlight could reach him had imparted to it.

He was impatient to leave the hospital, and at last he counted the days with feverish anxiety.

"Why are you so anxious to leave the hospital," said the Doctor to him one day in answer to one of his many inquiries as to when he would be pronounced convalescent, and be permitted to go.

"I wish to go home," was the reply.

"Your home could not have been a very comfortable one, or you would not have come here, there was nothing in your case to make it necessary that you should be placed in an hospital, a careful nurse was more needed than a skillful physician, watching would have been more to you than medicine; why then, be so desirous to leave the place before you are sure there is no fear of a relapse?"

"I have affairs of great importance to transact."

When he was able to tell his name, it had been entered on the hospital books, as Richard Cuninghame, by this name he was then addressed by the Doctor, nurse, and his fellow patients.

"Who are you Richard?" asked the Doctor in answer to the foregoing, "your speech and manners declare you to be a man of education, and one who has mixed in an elevated rank in society, what position did you hold in your young days?"

"I am a baronet, my land is in the next county to your own, my home is one of the finest Castles in Scotland, my signature is good for more money than would buy this hospital and endow it."

"Capital!" returned the Doctor laughing,

why you are quite a great man, you must give me your note of hand for a thousand pounds before you leave the house."

"I will do so now with pleasure," replied Sir Richard. He was naturally a miser—gold worshipper, but he was also proud and ostentatious as Lucifer; it must become known that he was in the hospital, and he would do away with that unpleasant fame by giving as a patient there had never given before.

The Doctor carried out his joke with the old pauper, who had evidently once been a gentleman, and now assumed to be classed among the aristocracy, produced pen, ink, and paper and wrote out a promissory note in favor of Dr. Barton for one thousand pounds which was signed by Richard Cuninghame Baronet, of Haddon Castle.

After duly expressing his thanks the doctor exhibited the document in the surgery to the great amusement of some medical students present, one of whom fastened it with wafers, inside the cover of a receipt book, saying it was too valuable to risk its being lost.

Three months after, the doctor was entering one of the banking houses in the city when he encountered a gentleman who bowed to him, a stiff, although courteously bow; Doctor Burton asked the bank clerk, who the gentleman was who had just gone out, saying "It strikes me I know the face and yet I cannot recall to my memory where I have met him."

"The gentleman who left the bank as you entered is Sir Richard Cuninghame of Haddon Castle."

In an instant the doctor recollected the face, and recognized in him the pauper patient; he immediately went for the promissory note, and delivering it to the bank clerk, received a thousand pounds for the benefit of the hospital.

On once more finding himself in the streets of Aberdeen, Sir Richard made the best of his way to the office of Waddell and Wood. The Waddells, father and son, had been his own and his father's lawyers, and he knew if any one would recognize him, it would be them or perhaps some clerk who had been in their employment twenty years before.

The office was easily found, there it stood the same old house, built of granite, with its gable end to the street.

He opened the outer office; all exactly as he had seen it twenty years before, the very desks seemed old friends, his hopes of identification had been at a low ebb as he walked around him, every face that he looked at was that of a stranger, he felt as if he were some one of a former age come trespassing on the ground, which had long been the property of his successors.

"Is this the office of Waddell and Wood?"

"Yes."

A curl yes, but good enough for the coat and hat he wore. It is generally to the clothes of a stranger we speak, if we answer stately and respectfully, it is sure to be to one arrayed in purple and fine linen, one whom we fancy from the texture of his garment fares sumptuously every day.

"I wish to see Mr. Thomas Waddell."

The young gentleman addressed was busily employed in the important occupation of paring his nails, and on being first spoken to, did not condescend to lift his eyes from the thumb nail he was endeavouring to model on the most approved principle; but on hearing the name Mr. Thomas Waddell, he suspended his operations, although still keeping the knife on a small point of the nail, which to ensure the symmetry of the whole must be pared down, and opening his eyes to their full extent, which was not much, these orbs being the smallest of washed out blue twinklers, he said in a slow dignified manner meant to impress his hearer with a due notion of his, (the clerk's) importance.

"You wish to see Mr. Thomas Waddell?"

"I do." An impatient "I do."

"Then," impressively and with an air of solemnity. "You cannot see Mr. Thomas Waddell here sir."

"As he left the firm?"

"Yes, long ago."

Mr. Thomas Waddell was the one he could most depend on, a grasping man with severity

written in every line of his face, he would be the best counselor; he must seek him in his new quarters; it was curious the brothers had separated, he never thought they would.

"Where can I find Mr. Thomas Waddell?"

"That is a question not easily answered," replied Mr. Pomposity, without lifting his eyes from his thumb nail which he was again engaged in modelling his whole mind occupied with the important business. "His body is entered I believe in the Gray Friars Cemetery."

"Dead!" exclaimed Sir Richard, overwhelmed with surprise and regret at the loss of one whom he knew would have been an able counselor.

"Dead," reiterated the clerk in a pert manner he meant to be impressive.

"Then I shall see Mr. Wood."

"Sorry I can't oblige you there again" was the sippant answer, this time delivered with a half smile, to which he had not condescended previously; shutting his knife and putting it into his pocket, he folded his arms on the desk and leaning thereon waited for a reply.

"Is Mr. Wood still in the firm?" asked Sir Richard in an uncertain voice, as if he already anticipated the answer would be "He is also dead."

The clerk still maintaining what he supposed to be an imposing attitude, leaning on his desk, after a pause of one or two seconds said, with an air of pedantic gravity he fancied an exact copy of the calm composure of manner peculiar to the youngest, and handsomest member of the firm and gazing with unwinking eyes in the face of the stabbly dressed old man as he spoke.

"Mister man, will you have the goodness to inform me, where you have dropped from? in the enquiries you have made, you have in both instances inquired for gentlemen who are long since dead, the first you asked for, passed from this troubled stage of existence sixteen years since."

He had scarcely ceased speaking when Mr. John Waddell, the head of the firm, entered, and without noticing the stranger, threw a letter on the desk in front of the young clerk, saying as he did so.

"Take that letter down to Simpson and Brown's and bring me an answer; mind you don't waste your time, I'm waiting for you."

Sir Richard recognized him at a glance, older looking he was certainly, but there was the same quick clear voice, the same searching blue eye, so true itself it forced the truth from others.

Having given the letter to his clerk, Mr. Waddell walked into an inner office, to which Sir Richard followed him, removing his hat as the lawyer looked round to find who had the coolness to enter his sanctum unbidden.

"Who are you?" came involuntarily from his lips as with a deep scrutinizing glance the lawyer took in every lineament of face and figure, from the head with its thick shock of short gray hair, down to the ill shod feet, with their slipper like coverings, Sir Richard saw that he was recognized as some one the lawyer had seen and known, but, who, or when before come in contact with, his memory could not recall; it was enough the rubicon was past, the memory of name and person would come in good time.

"Who do you say I am, John Waddell?" John Waddell came in front of the stranger, and stood surveying him with a grave puzzled look as he passed his left hand several times across his chin, replying in a slow hesitating voice.

"Were I to say who I think you are, I would name one of the world has counted dead for upwards of eighteen years."

"I have been buried alive for eighteen years John Waddell!" said the old man, his pale cheek showing a healthier glow as the blood rushed to his face, stirred by the recollection of his wrongs, and the fear which still haunted him of being sent to an insane asylum to herd with madmen.

The colour spread over his face, together with the expression of his eye while he spoke, the tone of his voice, all combined to make assurance doubly sure; the lawyer felt certain he saw before him Sir Richard Cuninghame, although whether the shrewd, close fistled man of other days, or a poor insane wretch it was difficult to say. The face betokened neither imbecility or wildness, but the dress, particularly the hat and shoes, were such as no sane mechanic would willingly go abroad in.

"Where were you buried alive Richard Cuninghame?"

"In my own Castle of Haddon, by my own son; shut up in an iron cage under the roof in the eastern tower, with a space of six feet square to walk about, feed and sleep in; for the first three years with no change of raiment, until my clothes rotted off my back piecemeal; but as your eyes tell me you think these coarse rags are, they are the best I have had in all those long weary years; at first I was fed with a spuring hand on food that my servants would have refused to touch; but for the last ten years I have had wholesome food, and what in that hot place was more necessary, sufficient water. I fancy his object was to prolong my life as long as possible, that he might gratify his malignant passions; he never loved me, I saw the evil of his soul, and because I tried to amend him by punishment, he sought and had his revenge."